School of Theology at Claremont
1001 1405675
BX
5845
B7
A6

Theology Library

SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
AT CLAREMONT
California

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2024

https://archive.org/details/christinwhomchri0000revp

Aunt Celia
from
Cassie.

Xmas 1907.

BX
5845
B7
A6

The Christ in Whom Christians Believe

By the Right Rev.
Phillips
Brooks
D. D.

bp.
1835-
1893

Philadelphia
Henry Altemus Company

Copyright 1896 by Henry Altemus.

THE CHRIST
IN WHOM CHRISTIANS BELIEVE.

I WANT to read to you again the words of Jesus in the eighth chapter of the Gospel of St. John: "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." The service of God is not self-restraint, but self-indulgence. That is the first truth of all religion. That is the truth which we found uttered in those words of Jesus when we were thinking of them the other day. That is

the truth to which we return as we come back again to think of those words and all that they mean and all that the speaker of them means to us and to our lives. When we remember that truth, when we recognize that no man is ever to be saved except by the fulfilment of his own nature, and not by the restraint of his nature, when we recognize that no man, no personal, individual man, is ever to be ransomed from his sins except by having opened to him a larger and fuller life into which he has entered, we seem to have displayed to us a large region, into which we are tempted to enter, and which is so rich and inviting to us that we immediately begin to ask ourselves if it is possible that there should be such a region. It is simply a great dream that we set before us. It is something that we imagine, something that comes out of the imaginations and anticipations of our own hearts, simply stimulated by the possibilities of the life in which we are living. It would be very much indeed, if it were only that. It would bear a certain testimony of itself, if it simply came out of the perpetual dissatisfaction of men's souls, even if there were no distinct manifestation of that life and no possibility of entering into it at once with our own personal consecration, with the resolution of our own wills. But if it were simply a dream, ultimately it must fade away

out of the thoughts of men. It is impossible that men should keep on, year after year, age after age, this simple dream of something which does not exist. It would be like those pictures which the poet has drawn, something which appeals to nothing in our human nature and stands only as a parable of something that is a great deal lower than itself. The poet pictures to us in his imagination those things which do not appeal to our life, because they find nothing to correspond to their high portraits, to show those transformations of nature into something that is entirely different and foreign to itself. If religion be simply the dream that some men hold it to be, if it simply be the cheating of man's soul with that which has no reality to correspond to it, then it will be no more than this. Is there any assurance that is given to us, that is before the soul of man, of some great new life which it is given for man to seek, without which it is given for no man to be satisfied? I do not know where any man could find that assurance absolutely and entirely, unless there had stood forth before us the person of Him who spoke these words and who manifested them in His life. And therefore it is that, having pictured to you the richness of the life which is open to every man, his own true life, the large freedom into which he may go if, giving up his

sins he enters into the fulness of the life of God, I cannot help now calling you to think about Him who gives, not merely by His words, but by the whole of His own person and life, that manifestation of the reality of the divine existence and tempts us to follow after Him. In other words, we come to-day to think of Christ, Christ who claims to be the master of the world, Christ from whom the revelation of that higher life has come, not in its first instance in the manifestation of the words which he spoke, for it had been the dream of human hearts through all the ages, but who made it so distinct and clear that ever since the time of Christ men have been able to cease to seek after it, men have never been able to give up the hope and dream that it was there. It is our Christ in whom we Christians believe. It is the Christ in whom a great many of you listening to me now claim to believe — I do myself — in whom many of you do believe, whom many of you have followed into that newer life. I would to God that I could so set Him before you to-day, could so make you feel his actual presence in the life which we are living, which we may be living, that there should be no question in any man of the power that is open before him to enter into the higher life and to fulfil his soul to God. What I want to do, in the few moments which I may speak to you this

morning, is — laying aside all the theological conceptions regarding Him, laying aside everything that attaches to the complications and mysteries in which His nature has been involved in men's dreams of Him, laying aside everything which the churches are holding as the special doctrine of their especial creed — to go back to the very beginning and see if we can understand anything of what it is — this personal Christ, who lives here in the world and manifests the power of God and opens the possibility of every man. Surely it is good that we should know something about Him of whom we speak so much, that there should be some clear and directest conception of one whose name has been upon the lips of men for eighteen hundred years; and it is possible for us, in the simplest way, to understand how His power has come into the world and to see where it is possible that it should come and enrich our lives and make us different men. We go back, then, to the very beginning of the aspiration after God, which is in the heart of man everywhere. There has never been a race that has been without it. There has never been a generation that has not reached forward and thought there was a higher life, a fuller liberty, to which it could come. It has been in all the religions which have been not simply fears, but which have been the highest utterances of all the

different races in all the different generations of mankind and all the different countries of the world; and there was one especial race in one especial part of the world in whom that aspiration was especially strong. We will not ask how it came to be there. There it was in this strange people living on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea, and in all its history marked out by the strange peculiarity that it was a spiritual people, that in the midst of all its sins, blunders, and weaknesses it was forever lifting up its soul to God and striving to find Him out. Very often it blundered strangely and sadly. Very often it failed to get that for which it was seeking, by the very impetuousness, rashness, and earnestness of search. But it was always seeking after Him. And the years rolled by, and by and by in the midst of that great nation there was a little company of men who, accompanying one another from the beginning of their lives, had been searching after this God and trying everywhere if they could find Him. And one day they heard that down by the river which ran through their country, which was sacred to them from the multitude of old national associations, there was a great teacher come, who was declaring that for which the human soul was forever reaching after, the need of escaping from sin and entering upon and leading a higher life. This little company

went down and met two disciples of John the Baptist, and learned from them everything that they had to teach them. Their souls were stirred by that which he had to say. But one day, while he was teaching them, it seemed as if they had come to an end of that which he could teach them. He looked up, and there upon the hill just above the river there was passing one upon whom the gaze of the fishermen by the river immediately kindled, and he lifted his hand and said, "He is the one who is to teach you now. You must go after him. Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Great and mysterious words, that filled in that which men had believed in all the records they had read and the thinking they had done before! And they turned away from John and went after this new teacher and, following to His house, there they abode with Him during that day and the days that followed after. Little by little, as we read the story of their being with him, we can see them taken into His power, we can see how there was a certain fascination in His presence which laid hold upon them. It seemed at first to be purely human, to be the way in which one strong man takes possession of his fellowman and compels him to rely upon him. It was upon purely human ground. It was in the manifestation of the excellence of this human nature

of ours that they believed in Jesus and gradually became His disciples. Little by little it so commanded them that at last the moment came when it was impossible for them to separate themselves from Him; and one day, when the people were turning away from Him when He was preaching and saying things that it was hard for them to understand, He looked around upon them and said, "Are you going also, will you leave me now?" And then there burst forth from the lips of one of them, the most strong and characteristic act of the little company, those great words that declared how He had become necessary to them: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." You see the power that Jesus had acquired over these men. You see the way in which He had taken them absolutely into His dominion, simply because of the manifestation of character and life, simply because He had shown them what man might be and opened the springs of the better life in themselves by the words He had spoken to them. And then they lived on with Him still, and by and by they had become so convinced by His truth and wisdom, His character had so taken possession of them, that they were ready to believe anything that He said. One day He lifted up His voice and declared that which had gradually been dawning upon them all the time, that He was

more than they were, that He had brought in some mysterious way a divine life into this world and had much to communicate to them. He told them that He was the Father from whom His life and their life had come. He told them that He and the Father were one. He told them, not in theological statement, not as men have worked out since in their desire to know it fully, but in the simple statement of the truth that could be the inspiration of their life, that in His presence there was here the very presence of God among them. It was not strange to them, though human creatures, though men, that the highest aspiration of their humanity had never thought God so far from this world that it seemed to them strange that there should be in very human presence the divine life here with them. They could not explain it and did not try to explain it. Here it was, that which they had seen shadowed in the divinest men whom they had known, that which they had recognized. Here it was before them in this being who had won such a power over them that they were ready to accept His testimony with regard to Himself. Oh! my friends, let us not feel that the evidence of our Christian faith fails when it is seen to rest upon the word of Christ Himself. My neighbor knows more of himself than I know of him. I know more of myself than any man can know of me, if only I

be earnest and sincere. And that the greatest of men who ever trod this earth should not know more of His nature than any other man should know, and that therefore His word should not be the richest revelation of that which is in His life and makes His power over mankind, that is incredible. Therefore the men were right when they believed Jesus' own word and looked to Him for the divinity which He said was present with Him upon the earth. Then His life went on, and by and by fulfilled itself in the one great action in which He declared those two things which He longed to know, the life and newness of God and the power of their human nature. He gave His life for them, indeed, in the awful suffering that preceded and that culminated upon the cross. He gave His life in crucifixion for them, and in that crucifixion opened the divinest doors of His life, when opening a sanctuary of sorrow; and He bade them enter in and know there the absolute life of God and the great capacity of human nature to sacrifice itself for God. And before He died, and afterward, He again appeared to them. He spoke great words which said that this was not the end of things, that after they had ceased to see Him and touch Him and hear His voice He still was to be present in the world. He said that the mysterious presence of those who had passed away, which all had

known, was to culminate and be fulfilled in Him. "I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Wherever you "are together in my name, there am I." Words and words and words again like those He spoke, in which He declared that He was to be an everlasting presence among mankind, and therefore that which had taken place in the life of those disciples might forever take place; that that which Jesus had done in the days when He was present upon the earth should be continually repeated, in that He was forever to do that which He had been doing, giving Himself to human kind for their inspiration, for their elevation, for their correction, for their reproof, as He had been doing, their salvation, as He had been doing in those days in which He was here among them. Men have believed that simply. They have recognized that word of Christ, and found the fulfilment of it in their own lives; and that has been the Christian religion, — just exactly what it was in the old days when Jesus was present in Jerusalem and Galilee. Just exactly what men did then men have been doing in all the generations that have come since. Just exactly what was possible then is possible for them now — that we may become the followers of that same Christ and the receivers through Him of the divine life, by which alone the human life is perfected and fulfilled.

That is the Christian religion. That is the Christian faith. Is it not clear and simple, whether it be true or not? My friends, you may believe it or you may disbelieve it, but the Christian faith is clear and simple enough surely in this statement, stripped of a thousand difficulties, perplexities, and bewilderments. That is it, that there is in the world to-day the same Christ who was in the world eighteen hundred and more years ago, and that men may go to Him and receive His life and the inspiration of His presence and the guidance of His wisdom just exactly as they did then. If you and I had been in Jerusalem in those old days, what would we have done, if we were more than mere creatures of others, more than men merely absorbed in our business, if there were any stirring in our souls after the deeper and diviner desires, could we, would we have been satisfied until we had gone wherever He might be, — in the temple, in the courts, or on the country road, — and found that Jesus, and entered into some sympathy with His life, that He might give to us what revelation of life and what guidance of will it might be possible should come from Him to men who trusted Him, until we had entered into sympathy with Him and the fascinations of His character? That is the Christian life, my friends, the thing we make so vague and mysterious and difficult.

That is the Christian life, the following of Jesus Christ.

What is the Christian? Everywhere the man who, so far as he comprehends Jesus Christ, so far as he can get any knowledge of Him, is His servant, the man who makes Christ a teacher of his intelligence and the guide of his soul, the man who obeys Christ as far as he has been able to understand Him. What, you say, the man who imperfectly understands Christ, who don't know anything about His divinity, who denies the great doctrines of the Church in regard to Him, is he a Christian? Certainly he is, my friends. There is no other test than this, the following of Jesus Christ. So far as any soul deeply consecrated to Him, and wanting the influence that it feels that He has to give, follows Christ, enters into His obedience and His company, and receives His blessings, just so far He is able to bestow it. I cannot sympathize with any feeling that desires to make the name of Christian a narrower name. I would spread it just as wide as it can be possibly made to spread. I would know any man as a Christian, rejoice to know any man as a Christian, whom Jesus would recognize as a Christian, and Jesus Christ, I am sure, in those old days recognized His followers even if they came after Him with the blindest sight, with the most imperfect recogni-

tion and acknowledgment of what He was and of what He could do.

And then, again, is it not very strange, certainly, that there should be, in these later days, in all these centuries that have passed between the day of Jesus Christ and us, that there should have come a vast accumulation of speculation and conjecture, of theorizing and thought with regard to Christ and what He was, and that a great deal of it should have been very strange and should seem to us to-day to have been very silly, a great part of it should have seemed to be but a work of intelligences that were half dulled and blinded, full of prejudice, and shrinking from the error and the danger in which they stood? What does it mean — all these complicated theologies that we say are keeping us away from the simple following of the grandest figure that has ever presented Himself before human kind? I know not how else it can be when I see what has been the power of Jesus over thoughts and homes and hearts of men through all these years. It seems to be a previous necessity that He who most fastens the heart and life of man, who seems to be most necessary to the soul of men, shall so attract their thought, shall so draw them all to Himself that their crudest speculations, that their most erroneous conceptions, shall fasten upon him, and they shall be in some true way a testi-

mony of the way in which He has always held the human heart. This is the way in which all crudities of theology, all the weaknesses of speculation, all even of the most strange and foul thoughts in regard to the life of Jesus and His manifestation in the world, have accumulated around that gracious figure, so simple and strong, which walks through our human life and manifests to us the God. Surely it is in one conception of it, and the true conception of it, the great perpetual testimony of how men have cared about Jesus, that they have speculated about Him in such strange perplexing ways. But He about whom the world does not care walks through the world and bears His simple being. There is nothing that fastens upon Him, that perplexes His life, that makes mysterious and strange the life He lives. But where is the great man in all the history of human kind that has not gathered about his person and work the speculations of those whom we find, with their crude and unguided minds, have formed their theories in regard to Him? It is the very abundance of the strange speculations with regard to Christ, it is the very strangeness of the theories that have been formed with regard to Him, that has shown me how He has drawn the hearts of men, how He has not let them go, but compelled them to fasten themselves to Him, to think about Him and try

to follow Him in such poor, blind ways as they were able to give themselves to Him in. This, then, is the Christian faith. This is the way in which the larger life opens before mankind, by the following of a person, by the giving of the life into the dominion and the guidance and the obedience of one who goes forward into that life, himself thoroughly believing in it — for Jesus believed in it with all His human soul.

But then, we ask ourselves, is it possible that we can gather from such a life as Jesus lived so long ago, a life that was lived back in the very dust of history and that has come down to us in records which seem sometimes to be flecked with tradition and obscured with the distance in which they lived, is it possible that I should get from him a guidance of my daily life here? Am I, a man of the nineteenth century, when everything has changed, in Boston, in this modern civilization, — can Jesus really be my teacher, my guide, in the actual duties and perplexities of my daily life and lead me into the larger land in which I know he lives? Ah! the man knows very little about the everlasting identity of human nature, little of how the world in all these changeless ages is the same, who asks that; very little, also, of how in every largest truth there are all particulars and details of human life involved; little of how everything that a man is to-day,

upon every moment, rests upon some eternal foundation and may be within the power of some everlasting law. The wonder of the life of Jesus is this — and you will find it so and you have found it so if you have ever taken your New Testament and tried to make it the rule of your daily life — that there is not a single action that you are called upon to do of which you need be, of which you will be, in any serious doubt for ten minutes as to what Jesus Christ, if He were here, Jesus Christ being here, would have you do under those circumstances and with the material upon which you are called to act. Men have tried to go back and imitate the very activities of the life of Jesus Christ, to do the very things that He did. Souls have fled across the sea and tried upon the hills and in the plains where Jesus lived to reproduce the life that has so fascinated them. They were poor and unphilosophic souls. The soul that takes in Jesus' word, the soul that through the words of Jesus enters into the very person of Jesus, the soul that knows Him as its daily presence and its daily law — it never hesitates. Do I doubt — I, who see myself called upon to be the slave of these conditions which are around me — to do this thing? Because it is the custom of the business in which I am engaged, do I doubt for a moment if I turn aside and open this New Testament,

which is Jesus' law with regard to that thing? I, with my passion boiling in my veins, leading me to do some foul act of outrageous lust, have I a single moment's doubt what Jesus would have me do if He were here — what Jesus, being here, really wants me to do? There is no single act of your life, my friend, there is no single dilemma in which you find yourself placed, in which the answer is not in Jesus Christ. I do not say that you will find some words in Jesus' teachings in the Gospel of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John that will detail exactly the condition in which you find yourself placed; but I do say that if, with your human sympathies and your devoted love, you can feel the presence of that Jesus behind the words that He said, the personal perfectness, the divine life manifested in the human life, there is not a single sin or temptation to sin that will not be convicted.

There is where we rest when we claim that Jesus Christ is the master of the world, that He opens the great richness and infinite distances of the human life, that He shows us what it is to be men. It would be little if He did that simply with the painting of some glorious vision upon the skies beyond; but that He comes into your life and mine, into our homes and our shops, into our offices and on our streets, and there makes known in the actual circumstances of our

daily life what we ought to do and what we ought not to do — that is the wonder of his revelation; that is what proclaims him to be the Son of God and the Son of man. Think, as you sit here, of anything that you are doing that is wrong, of any habit of your life, of your self-indulgence, or of that great, pervasive habit of your life which makes you a creature of the present instead of the eternities, a creature of the material earth instead of the glorious skies. Ask of yourself of any habit that belongs to your own personal life, and bring it face to face with Jesus Christ and see if it is not judged. A judgment day that is far away, that is off in the dim distance when this world is done — it shall come, no doubt. I know none of us can know much with regard to it, except that it is sure. But the judgment day that is here now is Christ; the judgment day that is right close to your life and rebukes you, if you will let Him rebuke you every time you sin, the judgment day that is here and praises you and bids you be of good courage, when you do a thing that men disown and despise, is Christ. Therefore it is no figure of speech, it is no mere ecstasy of the imagination of the preacher, when we say that in the midst of these streets of ours, more real than the men that walk in them, more real than the sidewalks that are under our feet, and the build-

ings that tower over us, there walks an unseen presence. An unseen presence? Yes. Are you and I going to be such creatures of our senses that we shall not believe that there are powers that touch us that we cannot see? Am I going to be so bound down to these poor fingers and to these poor eyes that I shall know myself in no larger connection with the great, unseen world? I will not. No great man, no manly man, has ever allowed such a limitation of himself. There is the unseen presence in the midst of our life, and he who will feel it may feel it, and that unseen presence speaks to him continually. It knows every one of us. It knows the rich man and knows what his wealth has made of him. It knows whether it has made him selfish. Shall I say it? He, the Christ, the present Christ, knows whether the rich man's riches have made him selfish and base and mean, covetous and poor and little-souled, or whether he has been glad to rise to the greatness of his privilege, and be the very utterance of the beneficence of God upon the earth. He knows the poor man and his struggles, he knows the poor man and his self-respect. He speaks to the poor man's soul, who has been kept poor because he will not enter into the baser methods and motives of our modern life, and is despised, and says to him, "Be of good courage, for I know what you are." He

speaks to the poor in distress and poverty. He speaks to the wretched in their disappointment and their pain. He is their comforter. He knows every sin. He knows every sorrow of our life. He goes, unseen on earth, into the chambers where the dead lie dead, and where the sick lie dying, and He speaks His words of consolation, He opens up the glory of the perfect life. He lays his hand upon the mourner whose soul is bowed down to the earth and says, "Look up," and points into eternity and heaven. All these things Christ can do not merely, but Christ is doing. He is the inspiring power of this life, that keeps it from rotting in its corruption and degradation. We dwell too much, I think, upon some of these things; we cannot dwell too much, perhaps, but we dwell out of proportion, it may be, to the thought of Jesus Christ, the comforter of sorrow. He is the comforter of sorrow, for he knew and he knows what sorrow is. In His own crucifixion, in that which came before His crucifixion, He knew the suffering of this earthly life. There is no human being who ever has known the misery of man as Jesus knows it, and so He comes to all sorrows with tender consolation. God grant, God grant He may come to any of you who have come into these doors to-day with a sorrow, with a fear, with a dread upon your hearts, with souls that are wrung, with

bodies that are suffering! God grant that the Christ may comfort you, may comfort you! But not only that. Shall there be no Christ for those who for the moment seem to need no comfort?

Shall there be no Christ for the strong men who have before them the duties of their life, and who want the strength with which to do them? Shall there be no Christ for the young men, the young men standing in danger, but also standing in such magnificent and splendid chances? It is great to think of Christ standing by the sorrowing and comforting them. It is great, — we will not say it is greater, — it is very great, when by the side of the young man just entering into life there stands the Christ, saying to his soul, with the voice that he cannot fail to hear: "Be pure, be strong, be wise, be independent; rejoice in Me and My appreciation. Let the world go, if it is necessary that the world should go. Serve the world, but do not be the servant of the world. Make the world your servant by helping the world in every way in which you can minister to its life. Be brave, be strong, be manly by My strength." Oh! young man, if you can hear the Christ speak to you like that behind all the traditions of the street, behind the teachings of the books, behind all that the wise and successful men say to you, behind all the cynics and sneerers say to you, the great,

strong, healthy voice of Jesus Christ, who believes in man because He has known man filled with divinity, and believes in you because He knows that which has been set before you by your Father in the sending out of your life, and who longs and prays and waits to strengthen you, that you may do your work, that you may escape from sin, that you may live your life, this great figure of the present Christ that Christianity can produce — it is not the memory of something that is away back in the past, it is not the anticipation of something to come in the future. We talk about Christ the Saviour, and think about Calvary long ago. We talk about the Christ the Judge, and think of a great white throne set in some mystic valley of Jehoshaphat, where some day the world is to be judged. We do not so get hold of Christ. The Christ who is in the past is not our Christ unless His power holds forth, the power of His spirit, which is the whole knowledge of the life in which we live. We think of the Christ of the future, for whom all the world is waiting. He will never enter into us and lead us unless we know that He is here and now. It does seem to me sometimes that if men would only take religion as a real and present thing, and if, instead of worshipping it in the past and expecting it with fear and dread and vain hope in the future, it could

be a real thing with them here and now, something in which they are to live, not to which they are to flee in moments of doubt, not of which they should make rescue, but in which they should do all their work and live, then religion would be to the soul of man so that it could not be cast aside, so that they must enter into it and take it into themselves and make it their own. Religion is not the simple fire-escape that you build, in anticipation of a possible danger, upon the outside of your dwelling and leave there until danger comes. You go to it some morning when a fire breaks out in your house, and the poor old thing that you built up there, and thought you could use some day, is so rusty and broken, and the weather has so beaten upon it, and the sun so turned its hinges, that it will not work. That is the condition of a man who has built himself what seems to be a creed of faith, a trust in God in anticipation of the day when danger is to overtake him, and has said to himself, I am safe, for I will take refuge in it then. But religion is the house in which we live, it is the table at which we sit, it is the fireside to which we draw near, the room that arches its graceful and familiar presence over us; it is the bed on which we lie and think of the past and anticipate the future and gather our refreshment. There is no Christ except the present

Christ for every man, unto whom all the power of the historic Christ is always appearing, and who is great with all the sweet solemnity that comes from the knowledge of what in the future He is to be to the world and to the soul. I am anxious to-day to impress this upon you: that the Christian faith is not a dogma, it is not primarily a law, but is a personal presence and an immediate life that is right here and now. I am anxious to have you know that to be a Christian does not mean primarily to believe this or that. It does not mean primarily, although it means necessarily afterward, to do this or that. But it means to know the presence of a true personal Christ among us and to follow. Here is the only true power by which a religion can become perpetual. Men outgrow many dogmas which they hold. The lines in which they try to li : change their application to their lives. But I know a person with a deep, true life; I enter into a friendship with one who is worthy I should be his friend, and he is mine always. What is the meaning of this sort of talk that we hear about a faith that they held once, but they have outgrown? What is the reason of this expectation that seems to have spread itself abroad, of necessity that the boy who had a religion should lose his religion some time or other, and that by and by he should take

up a man's religion somewhere upon the other side of the gulf of infidelity and godlessness, through which he has passed in the mean while? You expect your boy of ten years old to be religious with a child's sweet, trusting faith; and you hope that your man of forty and fifty, beaten by the world, is to have found a God who can be his salvation. But the years between? What do you think of your young men of fifteen, twenty, twenty-five, and thirty years old? To have outgrown the boy's faith, and not to have come to the man's faith? That seems almost to be an awful fate and destiny which you expect for them. But if our faith be this, then there shall be no need, no chance that a man shall outgrow it. Know Christ with the first conceptions, imperfect and crude, of his boy's life, and he shall go on knowing more and more of that Christ. That friend, the Christ he knows at twenty-five, shall be different from the Christ he knew at ten, just exactly as the friend I know at fifty is different from the friend I knew at thirty, twenty years ago; and yet He is the same friend still, forever opening the richness of an ever richer life, filling it with new experiences, with new manifestations of Himself. Let him drop something which seemed to him to be a part of the religion, but was only a temporary phase or condition of it, going forward with the soul all

through the opening stages of life, and at last going forward with the soul into the life where it shall see as all along it has been seen, and know as it has been known. The old legend was that the clothes of the Israelites, which the Bible said waxed not old upon them in the desert during those forty years, not merely waxed not old those forty years, but grew with their growth, so that the little Hebrew who crossed the Red Sea in his boy's clothes wore the same clothes when he entered into the Promised Land. It is the parable of that which comes to the man who has a true Christian faith, a faith which comes in the personal friendship of Christ, a faith which comes not in the belief of certain things about Him, not in the doing slavishly of certain things which it seemed as if it had been said by Him that we must do, but in the personal entrance into His nature in a life for Him, in which He is able to send His life down into us.

Then there is another thing that people are always thinking, that I hear very often from men, and that I have no doubt that I should hear from many of you, one by one. You talk about your earlier religion as if it had been some sort of a bondage from which you had escaped. How common it is to hear men, especially in this region, say: "I would be, perhaps, religious, except that there was so much religion forced upon

me in my earliest days. I was driven to church when I was a boy, in those old Puritan days. I went to school, where they forced prayers upon me all the time. I was made to be religious, so now I cannot be religious." Was there ever a more dreadful thing than for a soul to say that, because, it may be, of the unwisdom, or the imprudence, the overzeal and the mistaken zeal of other men, we have not got the full blessing of that rich, open, free life with Christ which the youth may have, and therefore we will abandon the privileges of our higher life which is given to us in our manlier years? It all comes of this awful way of talking as if religion were the duty and not the inestimable privilege of human kind. The Christ stands before us and says, "Come to me." You say, "Must I?" And He answers, "You may." He will not even say, "You must." You may. And duty loses itself in privilege, and the soul enters into independence and escapes from its sins, fulfils its life, lays hold of its salvation, becomes eternal, begins to live an eternal life in the accepted and loving service of Christ.

Now just one word, my friends. If this be so, whether you to-day are ready to make Christ your master and your friend or not, do not, I beg you, let yourself say that it is a silly or unreasonable belief, thus to know of a spiritual

presence which is here among us, in which God is really in humanity. Do not let yourselves say, my friends, that the man who gives himself to Jesus Christ and earnestly tries to enter in deeper and deeper into his life and tries to do his will, that he may know the Christ and know himself in the Christ more and more — dare not call that brother a fool, as you have sometimes called your Christian man who watched scrupulously over his life and prayed, yes, prayed, the thing you think perhaps the foolishest thing that man can do, the thing that is the most reasonable act that any man does upon God's earth. If man is man and God is God, to live without prayer is not merely an awful thing: it is an infinitely foolish thing. When a man for the first time bows down upon his knees and prays, "Oh! Christ, come unto me, reveal Thyself to me, make me to know Thee, that I may receive Thee, make me to be obedient that I may take Thee into my life," then that man has claimed his manhood. I beg you, I implore you, I adjure you that, if you be not ready to be Christian, you at least will know that the Christian life is the only true human life, and that the man who becomes thoroughly a Christian sets his face toward the fulfilment of his humanity, and so for the first time truly is a man. "As many as received Him," — so the great Scripture word

runs of this Christ of whom we have been talking, — "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God."

Just think of it! — the sons of God! The power to become that to as many as will receive the present Christ.

PB-3957-1-SB
5-11

BX
5845
B7
A6

118119

Brooks, Phillips bp.
The Christ in whom
Christian believe

DATE DUE	BORROWER'S NAME

Brooks
Christ

THEOLOGY LIBRARY
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY AT CLAREMONT
CLAREMONT, CALIFORNIA

PRINTED IN U.S.A.